

SOCIO-POLITICAL DRIVERS OF UGANDA'S POLITICAL INTEGRITY CHALLENGES: TOWARDS A NORMATIVE ETHICAL FRAMEWORK

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ABSTRACT

The thesis investigates why, despite the existence of an integrity system, political integrity challenges such as political violence, election rigging, and manipulation of laws are persistent in Uganda. Specifically, it analyses the conceptual contestations on political integrity; describes Uganda's experience of political integrity challenges; examines the socio-political drivers of Uganda's political integrity deficit; and advances a normative ethical framework for improving Uganda's political integrity profile. Drawing on virtue ethics and the morality of power games theories, I qualitatively investigated this phenomenon using NRM-Uganda as a case study. I used Focus Group Discussions, Key Informant Interviews and documentary review to collect data. Findings reveal that Political integrity is a contested concept with three major perspectives – the moralist, amoral, and political integrity views as distinct from ordinary moral standards. A proper conceptualisation of political integrity was advanced in tandem with ethical ideals such as respect for human life and human dignity, and stewardship in use of public resources. Employing the historical method and critical theory, the study establishes the drivers of political abuses as embedded within the oppressive and exploitative character of the Ugandan state which is rooted in the colonial experience. Structures of injustices, through which political leaders abuse their positions, have been sustained. This buttresses the often-cited drivers of political abuse like economic hindrances, institutional and legal failures, and social diversities. For a functional political integrity system, this study advances an emancipatory normative ethical framework based on the cultivation of a civic culture among the citizens. It suggests deployment of civic ethics education with an emphasis on elements of civic knowledge, virtues and skills. The possession of such civic competencies would enable citizens to influence the political direction of the country. Notably, theoretical and practical obstacles would likely undermine the cultivation of a civic culture. The study suggests nonviolent civil disobedience as a remedy to the persistent political integrity challenges in circumstances where efforts to cultivate a civic culture are frustrated.